

Report of the of the Bradford Environment Forum to the meeting of Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on Tuesday, 26th September 2017

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Subject:

Bradford Environment Forum (BEF) Annual Report 2016-2017

Summary statement:

Bradford Environment Forum (BEF) brings together third sector organisations and groups which are involved in environmental activity in the Bradford District. BEF seeks to provide representation in strategic discussions and provide communication tools to enable groups to work together to maximise positive environmental activity in the Bradford District.

This report provides a summary of some of the current and recent projects that illustrate the types of contribution the Voluntary and Community Sector contribute to life in Bradford and to supporting the District's priorities.

The report also provides a summary of the commissioned environment initiatives (projects).

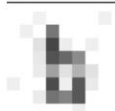
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Portfolio:

Environment and waste

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Environment and Waste



1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. Bradford Environment Forum (BEF) brings together third sector organisations and groups which are involved in environmental activity in the Bradford District. BEF seeks to provide representation in strategic discussions and provide communication tools to enable groups to work together to maximise positive environmental activity in the Bradford District.
- 1.2. Bradford Community Environment Project co-ordinate the BEF with support from CNET and the Bradford District Assembly.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.2 Bradford Environment Forum (BEF) was established in 2002, becoming a constituted organisation in 2008. The object of BEF is to provide third sector representation in strategic discussions and to provide an environmental network in the Bradford District which will enable third sector organisations and community groups to work together and to maximise positive environmental activity in the Bradford District.
- 2.3 BEF is an informal network of organisations involved in environmental activity within the Bradford District. It includes representatives from voluntary and community sector environmental groups, the Council, businesses, interested individuals and is open to all. Any individuals, groups or schools wishing to get involved in local environmental projects should contact Bradford Community Environment project
- 2.4 BEF meets its aims by:
 - Bringing together people, resources and ideas to enable positive environmental activity in the Bradford District
 - Co-ordinating events, meetings and discussion
 - Providing a forum for exchange of information.
 - Creating opportunities for partnership working
- 2.5 Resource constraints - Due to increasing financial and resource pressures on organisations (especially those with paid staff), BEF activity is limited. Communication is still facilitated by an email group but the frequency of meetings has been reduced. Demand from organisations requiring services, especially schools and community organisations exceed capacity.
- 2.6 Benefits to the District - The constituent VCS organisations and groups play an active and important role in improving Bradford's environment and increasing community confidence in engaging and working with the outdoors. The BEF partners offer opportunities for active engagement in environmental projects for schools, businesses and community groups.
- 2.7 VCS organisations contribute to the delivery of several Council strategies and functions;
 - Food Strategy; planning and development as well as implementation
 - Woodlands Strategy; maintenance of woodlands as well as tree planting
 - Biodiversity, Nature and People; managing spaces for the benefit of people and



wildlife.

- Play and early years; Forest Schools and resource use.

2.8 This report highlights, as examples, three of the current projects being delivered in the district. They emphasise the importance of support received from the Council through the Environmental Commissioning Fund (ECF).

Forest of Bradford - Forest of Bradford is an exciting initiative to increase woodland / tree cover throughout the district in partnership with its local communities. The project was set up in 1998 with the aim of establishing 480 hectares of native woodland, equivalent to one million trees. Local schools, businesses, other organisations and individuals have helped develop and carry out the planting schemes.

To date, the project has planted 465,000 native trees / shrubs at over 350 different sites across Bradford district. In addition to new planting, the project offers advice and practical assistance with existing woodland management and can help draw in grant aid for this work

The previous year continued to challenge the project in terms of financing its core work, of increasing woodland cover in Bradford district in partnership with local communities. The Environment Commissioning Fund (ECF) from CBMDC continues to play a crucial role in supporting core work and in leveraging in outside sources of funding. ECF funding provides salary and some overhead costs for one member of staff for two days per week. The funding provided enables the project to work with volunteer groups, land owners and businesses in planting 30,000 trees per year and managing a number of the district's publically accessible woodlands. At the end of last year's planting season the project had significantly exceeded its important milestone of planting half a million trees across Bradford district.

We have been very successful in the level of public engagement developed in delivering our work this year. Groups such as Sant Nirankari Mission Yorkshire mentioned above have attended events in record high numbers. We also continue to work regularly with Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth groups from Bradford and the wider West Yorkshire district. This has been a very good year for business engagement, with more staff day time volunteered than in previous years. We have worked with approximately 730 volunteers this year from a wide cross section of our community and across the age range (infant school to 75 yr olds.)

In February, we held a tree planning session at Dealburn Road, Low Moor, Bradford. 110 members of the Sant Nirankari Mission and 25 volunteers from Forest of Bradford planted 2500 trees in a little over an hour. EVCS funding allowed us the time to deliver this project, a record number of individuals involved and trees planted in that time.



BEES - core services funded by ECF include -

- The Conservation Volunteer Group engaging a wide range of volunteers seeking to make positive environmental change in their neighbourhoods. The programme is an opportunity to develop skills, undertake healthy activity, retain social contact and contribute to management of wildlife rich green space in Bradford. The group takes referral from health and employment agencies as well as self-referred volunteers.
- A programme of Wildlife Field Visits offering a shared learning experience, lifelong learning and a valuable resource of species recording for sites in the district and beyond.
- Community Orchard providing local food and events (Apple Day). In addition to core funding, this project will also be supported by a grant from Postcode Local Trust from July 2017 to June 2018

The council grant supports one part time member of staff, plus some casual hours, but it cannot be underestimated how essential it is as a source of income in order to run programmes that can be supplemented by further contact work.

Two other members of staff are funded part time by Big Lottery (Reaching Communities) to deliver environmental skills training to young people.

The following feedback from a couple of participants illustrates how the BEES services not only address the environmental outputs such as habitat management, but also offers a chance for personal development and a framework for support.

My contact with the Bees Wildlife Field Group has been over 20 years. When I initially joined the field trips I was working within the Social Services department in Bradford supporting elderly people and their families, later combining this responsible and stressful work with the care of an elderly father. A Bees day out helped to sustain me giving me something to look forward to as well as fresh air and exercise.

Moving on in retirement I assumed a leadership role in the group and with the support on offer was able to develop my interests and explore the wide range of environments of Yorkshire and beyond. In addition I have enjoyed the social contacts made in the group as well as contacts with professionals in the field. The group gave me a purpose in retirement and a means of continuing to support and care for my fellow men. The group has developed strong bonds over the years and it has offered support and encouragement in times of difficulty such as illness. I know the work we do is much admired and of assistance to people and organisations outside the group. I now at the age of 72 plan to take more of a back seat but have been mindful of developing the confidence of others in the leadership this role. We hope Bees will continue to flourish in the future.

I would say that the existence of BEES has a profound effect on my quality of life. For the past 30 years of its existence in Bradford I have been able to attend its talks, wildlife field visits, conservation programmes and events – in the past sometimes taking a day off work as holiday in order to do so.

BEES has enabled me to access countryside that is often inaccessible to me (as a non-driver). It has also been affordable. This has enabled me to live in a city, yet observe and



visit the countryside on a regular basis – something I value very much.

BEES has also provided the means and people, whereby so much knowledge is shared and exchanged – expertise on birds or botany or facts about local history and geography is passed on. In addition, there is the general bon-homie or friendly social exchange in conversations and banter on journeys and walks.

As a person recovering from mental ill-health, BEES has proved invaluable. BEES welcomed me back when I was not completely well, no questions asked. BEES provided a friendly social group, access to deep countryside, which would be impossible without the group for me. A walking group does not go to observe nature like this group does. As a single person interested in nature, BEES also provides the means for fulfilling this interest/need safely (walking on one's own is not always a safe idea).

Bradford Community Environment Project (BCEP) - BCEP contributes to the sustainable regeneration of Bradford district, through effective environmental programmes, inspired by community need. BCEP provide: green space improvements, environmental education and play and specialise in sustainable local food production. We run a Scrap Store and RePaint programmes, Public Health food growing and healthy eating commissions, Forest Schools training, provision and network support, green space improvement and community greenspace management. We work with twenty primary schools helping develop capacity to deliver the curriculum using their outdoor resources.

BCEP works with deprived communities across Bradford district including hard to reach groups including refugees and people experiencing mental illness, at risk groups, primary school children, BME groups, general public, the elderly and the isolated.

- Scrap Magic
- Forest Schools
- Gardening for Health
- Habitat Heroes
- The Roughs – Woodland Learning
- Urban Design Team
- Wibsey Park Community Garden
- Bradford Community RePaint

BCEP have delivered 12 sessions with a specific waste and recycling theme over this quarter; these have been based on the use of compost bins in a garden to minimise green waste to landfill, litter picking in school grounds and reusing waste materials to make plant pots.

Some feedback from users:

“Excellent, reliable and full of good ideas and advice for me to learn from.” Primary teacher.

“I couldn't have wished for a more flexible and sensitive approach to clients with often multiple personal and social issues.” Voluntary sector project worker



“Garden (allotment) makes me happy. I eat more fresh food. I do more walking. I like digging, and pick and eat. I make friends, I bring daughter, she likes too”. –client from refugee and asylum seekers’ allotment, Scotchman Rd, BD9

Our Lady and St Brendan’s Primary- A school with an intake from areas of high deprivation – Thorpe Edge and Ravenscliffe – children at Our Lady and St Brendan’s have limited positive experience of outdoor environments, low levels of attainment across the school and a need for understanding of healthy eating. Recognising this, the school engaged Habitat Heroes to create and maintain outdoor spaces with the children in Year 3, managing a school wildlife and vegetable garden to encourage children to broaden their experience and try new things they would normally have limited access to.

Recently this has included harvesting, cooking and eating strawberries, rhubarb, purple sprouting broccoli, chard, peas, beans and nasturtium. Teachers have commented that the majority of the children would never have chosen to eat most of these had they been served in the school kitchen: the full seed-to-plate involvement inspires them to overcome their ‘fears’. Children have also been involved in woodland crafting activities and tried their hand at creating different features for the outdoor garden including planting and maintaining biodiversity planters. Year 2 in particular enjoyed a ‘forest schools’ day as a part of this they took part in den building and toasted marshmallows over a fire.

“Children here really benefit from these types of activities, it engages them so effectively”
Teacher

3.0 Strategic Representation

Individual BEF members play an active part in a number of strategic roles, BCEP currently Chair the reconvened Bradford Environment Forum (BEF). As Chair of BEF BCEP are members of the Assembly Core Group working with leads of all the forums for a coordinated district wide approach linking VCS strategy and activity with the broader district aims. The Assembly Core Group organises the annual Bradford District VCS Assembly Conference. BCEP attend the Bradford Council VCS Relationship Management Group (RMG)

BEF members are representatives on a wide range of forums including:

- Active citizens group of the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership
- Young lives Bradford
- Health and Wellbeing Forum
- Environment and Waste Management Scrutiny Committee.

4.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

This report cannot accurately list examples of all VCS activity that supports the district’s environmental priorities. It has not been possible to collate information from all currently active organisations.



Examples of these groups are the many 'Friends of Groups' working in Council Woodlands and parks, Horton Community Farm dedicated to growing and supplying food, Bradford Urban Wildlife Group who monitor and manage land for wildlife as well as offer a range of educational talks and reserves such as Denso Marston supported by private business.

The VCS remains a responsive sector with the opportunity to act quickly to opportunities that arise. This provides the basis to grow when the funding climate changes, and to explore models of social enterprise.

5.0 FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

The Council funded projects are funded for 2 years to 31st March 2019.

BCEP	Grant amount	£9,046.80
BEES	Grant Amount	£17,911.80
Forest of Bradford	Grant amount	<u>£15,881.40</u>
Total		<u>£42,840.00</u>

All projects are delivering as planned.

6.0 RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

None

7.0 LEGAL APPRAISAL

None

8.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The Bradford Environment Forum continues to work across the district with in partnership with schools, businesses, community organisations and individuals from all backgrounds and abilities. It is very much focused on community cohesion and developmental opportunities in delivery of its projects.

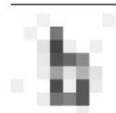
8.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

This is a key area of work for the Environment Forum both in terms of sustainability of the natural environment and sustainability for the organisations involved in delivery. The financial resources continue to present challenges for staff and delivery of projects but support from businesses and volunteers has been very much needed.

The biggest falls in VCS income have been from government sources. VCS organisations have to develop a sustainable funding package that supports long term capacity to deliver change against the need for their resources to have the biggest impact possible.

8.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

This is a key area of work for the Bradford Environment Forum and projects such as tree



and hedge planting mitigate against the impact of greenhouse gases. A major role undertaken by BEF is to educate on the harmful impact harmful emissions and provide practical projects and guidance on how to reduce the gases .e.g. walk to school schemes and environmental improvement work.

8.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

8.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None

8.6 TRADE UNION

None

9.0 NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

10.0 OPTIONS

10.1 That Bradford Council ceases the grant support given to Bradford Environment Forum and encourages volunteers to continue to undertake the work underlined in this report.

10.2 The Bradford Environment Forum continues to be supported by the Stronger Communities Coordinator to build on the commissioned work undertaken in this report.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 That the Committee acknowledges the achievements of the Bradford Environment Forum with the council grant.

11.2 That the Committee continues to support the work of the VCS partners in the Bradford Environment Forum.

11.3 A further report is provided to this committee to update them on the work undertaken in 2017-18

12.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Annual performance summary of Council funded environment projects

13.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None





**City of Bradford
Metropolitan District Council**



Appendix 1

Annual performance summary of Council funded environment projects.

BCEP Grant funded amount £9,046.80		
Output/outcome	Expected	Achieved
Number of education sessions delivered	100	132
Teachers engaged in consultation and review	4	49
New biodiversity features created	8	5
Existing biodiversity features maintained	12	14
Individual schools working with	4	3
Sessions delivered	100	136
Sessions with waste and recycling theme delivered	Ongoing	22
Individual children engaged	750	1,335
Learning opportunities delivered	1,500	2,200



BEES	Grant Amount	£17,911.80
Output/outcome	Expected	Achieved
Organise regular conservation volunteer days	36	53
Regular Wildlife Field Visits to Bradford Wildlife Areas and other wildlife sites.	29	35
Deliver a programme of public events, and attend others E.g. blossom day, Apple Day	2	2
Deliver a programme of activities with schools, colleges and community groups	4	3
Number of individuals engaged each quarter	120	116
New individuals engaged	24	32
Total number of user sessions per quarter	400	410
Number of people engaged each quarter	80	120
New people engaged	4	8
Total number of user sessions per quarter	290	600
No of people engaged in activities at public events	440	365
No of people engaged in activities with schools, colleges and community groups	250	35



Forest of Bradford	Grant amount	£15,881.40
Output/outcome	Expected	Achieved
Contact landowners to develop program of planting	7 Hectares planted	11
Establish a volunteer day program for the year for at least 200 days (mid week and week end)	200 volunteer days	223
Establish at least one hectare of biomass coppice woodland	1 hectare	1.1
Work with businesses on practical planting days and donations towards biomass woodland	6 business involvement schemes contributing to biomass woodland establishment	9
Contact landowners to develop program of planting	650m minimum new native hedgerow	1100
Involve at least ten new groups to the project in the year	Ten new groups	10

